

# Cañada de Agra, componer con la topografía y el paisaje

## *Cañada de Agra, composing with topography and landscape*

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**Resumen:** Cañada de Agra es un pueblo *ex novo* proyectado en 1962 por José Luis Fernández del Amo para el Instituto Nacional de Colonización, INC. Este artículo trata de establecer el contexto cultural de su producción, tras el aislamiento de la España de posguerra, el reto colonizador y el desarrollo del resto de la arquitectura europea. A lo largo del pasado siglo, la disciplina del "ruralismo" se puede rastrear, tanto en España como en Europa, como un tipo de urbanismo especialmente atento al paisaje, natural y productivo. Entre los arquitectos españoles involucrados en esa tarea, Fernández del Amo destaca por su aportación al trazado de pueblos del INC. A través del estudio de su trayectoria y del análisis en profundidad de Cañada de Agra, incluidos esquemas y un reportaje fotográfico, se trata de mostrar la relevancia de este pueblo en el planeamiento rural del siglo XX, en paralelo con otras obras de los protagonistas del movimiento moderno en la posguerra. Es más, dada la vuelta del "ruralismo" al debate contemporáneo, la relectura de este ejemplo sigue siendo útil para la práctica profesional reflexiva..

**Palabras clave:** Arquitectura, Urbanismo, Paisaje, Arte, Diseño.

**Abstract:** *Cañada de Agra is a new village designed in 1962 by José Luis Fernández del Amo for the Spanish INC (National Institute for Colonization). This paper aims to elucidate the cultural context of this urban project, during the Franco Regime's post-war period of isolation, the hinterland colonization challenge and the state of architectural development at that time. The discipline of "ruralism" can be traced throughout the 20th Century both for Spain and Europe, as a sort of planning policy primarily concerned with landscape, both natural and agricultural. Among the Spanish designers involved in this policy area, Fernández del Amo stands out for his extensive work in INC new settlements. In this examination of his career and in-depth analysis of Cañada de Agra, including schemes, diagrams and accompanying photo essay, the aim is to show the relevance of this project to the rural planning of the past century, in parallel with the work of other figures of the post-war Modern Movement. Moreover, as "ruralism" is now making a comeback to the contemporary scene, a re-reading of these events may be of value in considering our approach.*

**Keywords:** Architecture; Urbanism; Landscape; Art; Design.

## INTRODUCTION

*At the end of the nineteen fifties, the Instituto Nacional de Colonización (National Institute for Colonization, from now on INC) decided to undertake an irrigation project for a huge expanse of land in the Sierra de los Donceles, close to Hellin canal (Albacete province). Following the usual plans of the Institute it was decided to build three new population nuclei.<sup>1</sup> Eventually they would be called "Nava de Campana," "Cañada de Agra" and "Mingogil."*

*In 2015, the Regional Government of Castilla-La Mancha declared Cañada de Agra Bien de Interés Cultural (Asset of Cultural Interest, BIC), as a historical site "set in the landscape, a uniform and well-defined entity."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the village is included in the Iberian modern housing register, DoCoMoMo, where it is also included in the National Plan for the 20th Century.<sup>3</sup>*

*In this article we intend to analyze two questions regarding the urban project of Cañada de Agra: its importance in relation to the avant-garde within the historical context of the Franco regime, and the limitations confronting the colonization program. As regards architecture and urbanism in the Spanish post-war period we will try to establish their contextual dimension within the socio-political environment, as well as their sensitivity towards the landscape and territory. As regards agrarian policy and the creation of new towns or villages, we will try to identify the national program and its correspondences with other similar agrarian programs, as well as the progressive extinction of Spanish ruralism as a result of macroeconomic developments.*

## SPANISH TOWN PLANNING IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD: CONTRIBUTIONS FROM RURAL AREAS

*We can distinguish four kinds of activity related to urbanism in the years following the end of the Spanish*

*Civil War in 1939: the propaganda campaigns of the Regime; some small expansions or reforms in the urban areas; the rural actions of the Dirección General de Regiones Devastadas (Government office in charge of Post-war Rebuilding); and new towns or villages promoted by the INC.<sup>4</sup> The Architectural Service within the INC allowed a new generation of architects to develop their professional practice within a more permissive context.<sup>5</sup> Thanks to the peripheral character of their actions, the vagueness of internal rules and the character of José Tamés, the architect in charge of the office, a series of assorted projects were launched marked by "contradictory approaches, because although they were seeking to replicate traditional forms and environments, the serial arrangement of houses and the geometry of road planning departed substantially from the overall aim."<sup>6</sup>*

*The projects defined the whole physical environment of new towns in a way that led Alejandro de la Sota to plan a kind of surrealist joke in Esquivel.<sup>7</sup> His plan included urban design, architecture and public furniture and even applied arts for the development of the ecclesiastical program. Following its vague romantic beginnings, this rural urbanism or ruralism was designed on a scale with architectural perspectives. Results were mixed due to the different ethical and ideological attitudes and skills of their authors. Here, the more "anonymous" proposals might be compared with the designs of architects with a stronger personality like Alejandro de la Sota, José Antonio Corrales, Antonio Fernández Alba, Fernando de Terán, Rafael Aburto or lastly, Fernández del Amo himself.<sup>8</sup> One can find references to urban medievalism in Camilo Sitte, the utopias of the "Garden City" through its various evolutions, and the explicit model of Radburn, which is mentioned by the Instituto Nacional de la Vivienda (National Institute for Housing, INV).<sup>9</sup> Subsequently, more complex approaches*

were adopted (mainly from Germany and Italy), building structures which drew inspiration from the modern movement and "other contemporary formulations of European culture inherited from avant-gardes, although they show contradictions with the general policy trends."<sup>10</sup> If Italian ruralistic practice had already inherited a certain number of these contradictions, the German influences can be traced to the utopian origins of expressionism, from Gläserne Kette to the urbanists Rud Eberstadt, Paul Wolf, Martin Wagner or Josef Stübben.<sup>11</sup> We can even point out surprising influences; for instance the Zionist experiences in the kibbutzim or the moshavim.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, after the autarky years of the immediate post-war, "most referenced models were, Italy and Israel apart, those from United States, Denmark, the Balkans, Venezuela, Brazil and Portugal."<sup>13</sup>

### THE ARCHITECTURE SERVICE IN THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR COLONIZATION

The first government under General Francisco Franco was formed in Burgos on 31 January 1938, with the Falangist Raimundo Fernández-Cuesta in charge of the Ministry of Agriculture. One of his functions was the "economic and social reform of the land," creating for its development the Servicio Nacional de Reforma Económica y Social de la Tierra (National Service for the Economic and Social Reform of the Land, SENREST). When the war came to an end, a second government was established in Burgos on 9 August 1939. One of the most important changes, was the appointment of Joaquín Benjumea Burín as the new minister of Agriculture: it meant that a Fascist revolutionary was replaced by a prestigious professional who belonged to the Andalusian agrarian oligarchy.<sup>14</sup> Two months later SENREST was replaced by the INC in order to "create extensive plans of colonization

which will be carried out according to the rules of the Movimiento program (official party of Franco's Dictatorship).<sup>15</sup> In October 1941 the Architecture Service of the INC was formed as a body for the implementation of new settlements in the colonized lands according to the new Colonization Act (Ley de Bases de Colonización de Grandes Zonas, published on 26 December 1939).<sup>16</sup>

Under the direction of José Tamés, the Architecture Service of the INC initiates discussions about plans for new villages with homes either scattered or aggregated in population nuclei. In considering technical requirements and previous models they were aware of the need to create two new artificial environments: agricultural, based on irrigation, and urban, consisting of new settlements. Colonization had been an object of study for centuries, but they now took as an example the Agro Pontino from Fascist Italy, in spite of its important technical and social differences.<sup>17</sup> It is important to remember that in the Italian solution "towns function as service centers while the farmers' dwellings are scattered over the land, precisely on the plot of land allocated."<sup>18</sup> Tamés himself was conscious of the differences, although his ideas were mainly based on the Spanish situation, "as has been resolved in the irrigated areas of Sardinia and in Bonifica del Tavolière."<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, even technical inputs were observed from ideological points of view, both from an awareness of the risk posed by urban liberal-bourgeois culture and the south Spanish peasantry, in particular agricultural labourers, most of whom were anarchists or revolutionary socialists.<sup>20</sup>

Apart from foreign influences, the most obvious example of the planning of new INC villages was the Concurso de anteproyectos para los poblados de las zonas regables del Guadalquivir y del Guadamellato (Competition for Settlements

in the irrigated areas of the Guadalquivir and Guadamellato rivers) launched in 1933 by the Government of the Second Republic within the Servicio de Obras de Puesta en Riego (Service for Irrigation Works, OPER).<sup>21</sup> When creating the Architecture Service of the INC, Tamés was aware of the success of the competition in galvanizing several prominent architects, adherents to the newly emerged Rationalism.<sup>22</sup> At the time of the INC's foundation, which was essentially based on the ideas of the Republican Instituto de Reforma Agraria (Institute for Agrarian Reform, IRA), most of its urban planning was borrowed from the OPER, whose head of the agronomic service, Manuel Cavero, had already defined the basis of the competition for housing programs adopted by the INC.<sup>23</sup> It is however important to highlight one important difference: the INC villages were planned with a smaller size than the proposals prior to the war. Changes were also made in accordance with more modern ideas: the separation of traffic imported from Radburn or the CIAM, the centralized collective spaces, or the dynamic composition of plans.<sup>24</sup> All this was possible under the personal direction of José Tamés, who had held his position since the creation of the Service in October 1941 until his retirement in 1975. As Miguel Centellas points out: "it is not often that a directly appointed position of high responsibility is held by the same person for thirty four years."<sup>25</sup> A person who, furthermore, included in his team some Franco Regime dissidents, including some "infiltrated artists," as Enriqueta Antolín dubbed them.<sup>26</sup>

Alejandro Herrero published an article in the *Revista Nacional de Arquitectura* 1948, where he proposed separated traffic according to the models of Letchworth (1903), one of the few British Garden Cities which were directly inspired by the Howard model, or the later American suburb of Radburn (1928), whose town plan was recommended by the

INV.<sup>27</sup> It was an exotic note, since transferring the Anglo-Saxon model to the rural areas of Spain, really supposed that the cohabitation between cars-people would be transferred to animals-people. Nevertheless, the model impressed the youngest architects deeply and acted as an ideological totem even for Tamés: hygiene vs. tradition; modernity vs pre-modernity. As regards its urban plan, Herrero published (1955) another article where he defended separated traffic and included Camilo Sitte's instructions on the principles of urban composition concerning a need to break views, avoid monotony and pay attention to the details.<sup>28</sup> By then, some of the INC villages (for instance those designed by Alejandro de la Sota or Fernández del Amo) had abandoned the romanticism of those rules and had been transformed into international examples of new modernity.

### JOSÉ LUIS FERNÁNDEZ DEL AMO, THE ARCHITECT

José Luis Fernández del Amo was born in 1914 to a bourgeois family from Madrid. In his youth he demonstrated his great curiosity and critical spirit thanks to the influence of the reformers of Acción Católica (Catholic Action). He started his university studies in the "Central" (University of Madrid) and in the School of Architecture, with colleagues like Miguel Fisac and Francisco de Asís Cabrero. When the Civil War began he sought refuge in the Swedish Embassy and from there he fled to the Belgian abbey of Maredsous, where he remained for two years.<sup>29</sup> Returning to Spain in 1938, he fought in Franco's army as a sapper until the end of the war. He finished his studies in 1942 and began to work as an architect in the Dirección General de Regiones Devastadas, firstly posted to Aragon and one year later to Granada, where the office for eastern Andalusia was located under the direction



of Francisco Prieto Moreno. There, he started to engage culturally with young local artists, intellectuals and local politicians, like Antonio Gallego Burín, and also met Eugenio D'Ors, who at that time was leading a real renovation of Spanish art.<sup>30</sup>

Fernández del Amo finally became a civil servant in the INC on 28 March 1947. His most personal contribution as an architect was a series of projects for small towns, but prior to any exclusive attribution to him of these INC's settlements, one has to consider many other agents or circumstances:

- Settlements were planned under a multi-disciplinary process set out by the INC, where politicians, agricultural engineers and even the landowners could take decisions prior to architects.
- Each project was formally reviewed twice, in the Architecture Service and in the corresponding Section, being approved or corrected by an order from the General Directorate.
- Works had a long duration, on some occasions under the technical direction of a project manager different from the author.
- Finally, the uses of their inhabitants and the historical evolution of these nuclei have transformed their physical appearance in such a way that sometimes it can be impossible to match current spaces with the ones originally designed.

Fernández del Amo himself explained his convictions on many occasions with regard to contemporary art and architecture. His "legacy" on the integration of the arts was made clear in 1968, during the summer courses of the Menéndez Pelayo International University.<sup>31</sup> It is a utopian manifesto that testifies to his disappointment in the

practice of integration and considers some factors that point towards "the impossibility of seeking the integration of the arts."<sup>32</sup> We cannot forget that between 1952 and 1958 Fernández del Amo was director of the recently founded Museo Nacional de Arte Contemporáneo (National Contemporary Art Museum, MNAC), while carrying out his professional activities in the INC.<sup>33</sup> Apart from these institutional functions, he also performed another very important role, that of promoting contemporary artistic debate in Madrid: in this regard one of his most significant achievements was the creation of the El Paso artistic team.<sup>34</sup> In summary, if we want to analyze the coherence of José Luis Fernández del Amo's projects we must recognize the integration of the arts as one of his recurrent and fundamental principles: "no matter which art, which artist, they have provided man, any man, a horizon beyond the stars."<sup>35</sup> These words are a passionate defense of the idea of anonymity, lying deep within Christian communitarian ideology, whose main concepts, based on the collective, are seen as able to resolve current materialist contradictions within our society, and point inexorably to such mystical words as transcendence, revelation or redemption. His short text published in 1961 *Noción de Arquitectura* (An idea on Architecture) summarizes this principle with this sentence: "Let Architecture help man to real self-improvement."<sup>36</sup>

### **NEW INC VILLAGES PLANNED BY JOSÉ LUIS FERNÁNDEZ DEL AMO**

An advocate of the transcendence of Spanish ruralism, Fernández del Amo showed a pioneering sensibility towards the environment. A fundamental element in his most relevant new villages for INC was his admiration for autonomous ecosystems: at the beginning of the fifties, in his proposal (unbuilt) for Torres de Salinas by the Alberche River, the



**Figure 1.** Vegaviana.  
Pedestrian area.

planning of roads was subordinated to the “attention to spontaneous vegetation, wild plants, shrubs, and hedge mustards flowering on the banks.”<sup>37</sup> The preserved bank “would provide a dry garden, natural in the inhabited spaces” for the collective life of the farmers, “a vital atmosphere, and environment for man that the colonization must create.”<sup>38</sup>

This idea of preserving the natural memories of the past is featured in another project proposed by Fernández del Amo three years later, for the new

village of Vegaviana in Cáceres. This time he was able to carry it out thanks, perhaps, to the value of the area’s forests. In fact, due to the separation between traffic and pedestrians, he achieved in Vegaviana a series of areas for the co-habitation of people and a landscape “completely covered with shrubs, wonderful trees, most of them evergreen oaks, some old cork trees, and a ground cover of rockrose, lavender, thyme, hedge mustard and broom” (Figure 1).<sup>39</sup> Even the square, a simple arrangement of public buildings, avoids “a rigid and

closed composition" to preserve the integration of the site with the landscape.<sup>40</sup>

Not all of Fernández del Amo's villages for the INC were so explicit about maintaining local ecosystems. However, this relation with topography appears fundamental in most of his projects, from Belvis de Jarama (Madrid, 1949) to the expansion of Jumilla (Murcia, 1969). Especially in the flattest locations, the structures of roads, public spaces and special landmarks (especially the church tower) were planned with a respect for the previous landscape, whether natural or artificial. In spite of the anachronism and the huge differences of scale, one could say that the "imageability" of the urban elements of those towns was conditioned by the "memory of the place": its edges were conditioned by the agricultural operations and by the relation with the natural environment; the paths, by their direct relation with the land, are used to trace out the lines of the village plan; its nodes which complete the structure as civic places in relation to the pedestrian routes; and the landmarks that close the experience of the local countryside without enforcing a romantic rhetoric.<sup>41</sup>

## CAÑADA DE AGRA

The new village, Cañada de Agra, Albacete, lies in the irrigated area of the Hellín Canal some 7.5 km south of Hellín, a town in the Castilla-La Mancha autonomous region. Although the first traces of territorial planning go back to 1958, the Plan General de Colonización (Colonization Master Plan), of this First Sector was approved in September 1962, after being submitted and signed by Fernández del Amo in May 1962.<sup>42</sup>

The topographic situation of Cañada de Agra, between the road that links the three new irrigated

small towns "bordered by a hill, on whose slopes lies [...] on the foot of a steep gradient" is used to create a road system with a perimeter road and branching roads that end in a cul-de-sac (Figure 2).<sup>43</sup> The plan was influenced by North American models such as Green Brook (which were mentioned in the Architecture Service's report for Torres de Salinas) and also indirectly by the recent British "new towns."<sup>44</sup> But it also refers to the stipulations of the Instituto Nacional de la Vivienda already applied by the INC in Esquivel, Seville (Alejandro de la Sota, 1952) or in Llanos de Sotillo, Jaén (José Antonio Corrales, 1956).<sup>45</sup> In Cañada de Agra this traffic system is used to solve the differences in levels between streets with a longitudinal axis of residential blocks by means of terraces for aiding the separation of yards and homes. In short, the efficiency of the circulation assists the other civic functions and reinforces the use of topography as the village's sign of identity.

Due to the placement of the residential blocks "on terraces at different levels" so that each row has something like an enclosed yard for animals and agricultural outbuildings, and another for the house and the yard, the pedestrian's route to access their houses follows another two pedestrian streets running parallel at the same level to the corresponding street.<sup>46</sup> The structure of Cañada de Agra, thus, is based on a real system of pedestrian routes not only as a continuous street grid, but also to provide efficient circulation between the residential housing and the social activities. As wheeled traffic is restricted in the cul-de-sacs, the pedestrian space can open towards the central axis of the composition "with more moderate slopes," being an area defined for a succession of open areas and buildings for community life.<sup>47</sup> This series of spaces forms the village grid and creates its character as an actual continuous system, almost uniform in plan but ambiguous in relation with the built mass

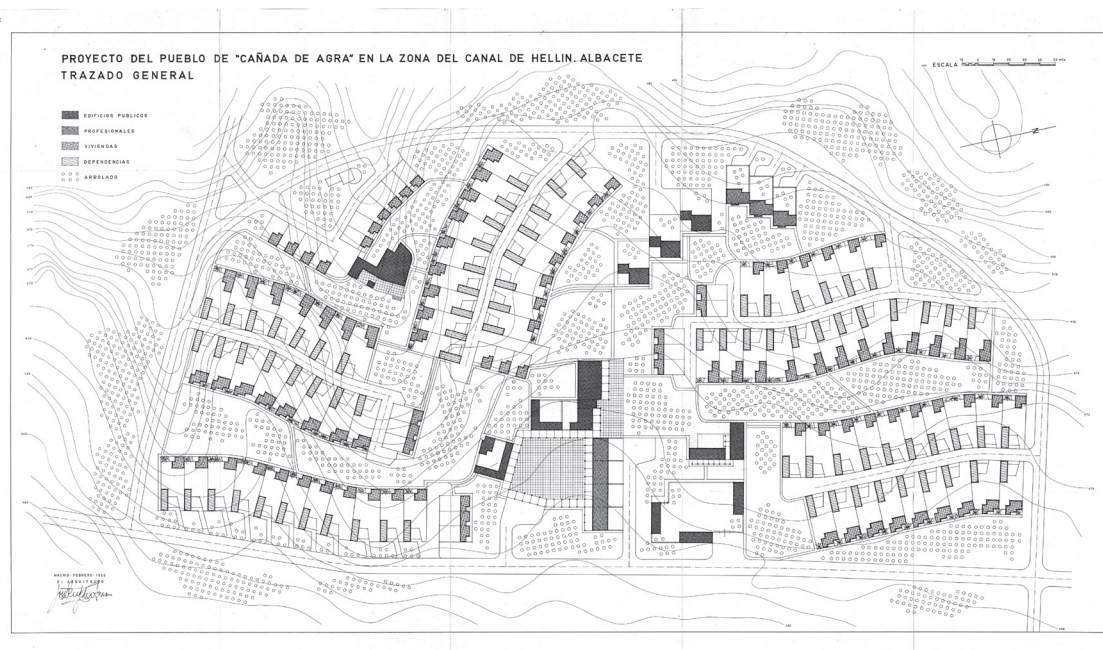


Figure 2. Cañada de Agra. General Plan.

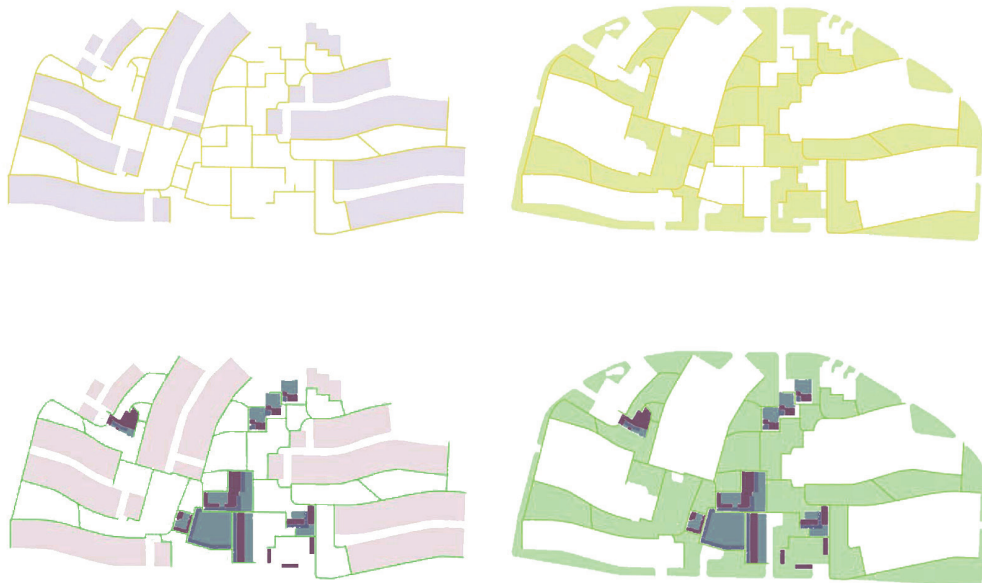
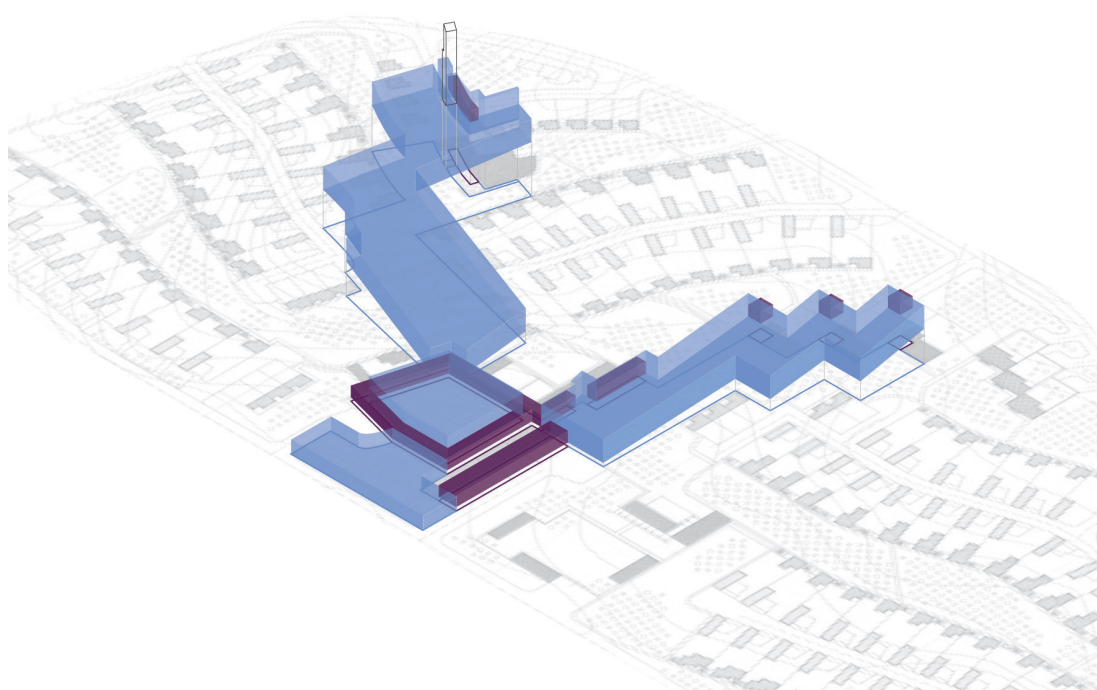


Figure 3. Cañada de Agra. Urban structure (from left to right, top to bottom): a) pedestrian and housing; b) pedestrian and open areas; c) pedestrian and buildings; d) pedestrian and community life areas.





**Figure 4.** Cañada de Agra. Open areas: urban structure sketch.

(Figure 3). If in Vegaviana these empty spaces were given a special character as natural countryside, here they reflect their urban function as restored green areas “rising among buildings, little forests of poplars and pine trees,” paved into the main surroundings and articulated in accordance with the natural topography and the architectural volumes.<sup>48</sup>

On the whole, the artificial landscape that forms the collective space results in a complex network of relations and ambiguities, where the rows of houses are placed so as to maintain the level and, at the same time, show a rhythmical succession

of volumes, in a naturalistic version of the British Crescent. Thus, the subtle structure of the town hides behind the perspective relations that connect the urban nodes, the main spaces for meeting people, the civic centre, the church atrium and the schools. From the lower level of the village hall, arcades to the lowest level open to the agrarian landscape, the space ascends in a “Y”: to the right (direction of the hill) towards the vague area of the schools; to the left, to the church atrium, a place for the meeting of the congregation. The hillside is stretched within the urban configuration, between the valley and the summits, between the main focuses: the square and the monumental tower of the



**Figure 5.** Cañada de Agra. Civic Center square.

church. But the landscape also draws strength as a subtle structure, homogeneous and diverse, thanks to the relations between urban landmarks and public buildings that are hidden and revealed, so that one can sense them as sequences of focal points that stretch the hillside from the uppermost point, the level of the church tower, to the lower level of the Civic Centre's esplanade, before climbing the hill slope again towards the Schools (Figure 4).

To preserve this sense of a common chain of places, both the housing and the civic buildings share a sober formal attitude, in accordance with the valley landscape. Thus, the Civic Centre integrating town

hall, social center, health services, shops and crafts, creates a homogeneous square defined by three double storey porticoed sides, closed by a fourth side open to the countryside through a simple colonnade (Figure 5). The housing rows, on the other hand, have double faced horizontal linear fronts: to the pedestrian areas, a domestic sequence of human scaled openings and entranceways (Figure 6); to the traffic alleys, a rhythmic chain of gables and curved walls (Figure 7). As for the high tower, a fundamental and identifying landmark of the village within the surrounding territory, it is interesting to study its evolution during the project.<sup>49</sup> In the first sketches dated July 1959 the tower's height is quite





**Figure 6.** Cañada de Agra. Pedestrian way.

similar to the present configuration; nevertheless, it is a little smaller in the project submitted in 1962 to the INC, perhaps to avoid the town structure being less dichotomous, or simply just for money reasons. On the other hand, the Architecture Service report advises that “the tower should be higher, and the architect in charge of the works should study its proportion in relation to the rest of the buildings.”<sup>50</sup> The result is a viewing point where the “slim bell tower of the church presides over the urban scene,

especially in this case, where the topographic situation of the church becomes dominant” (Figure 8).<sup>51</sup> In this way the grid is neutralized, which could become a labyrinth in its triple tension, although more balanced and rational due to the repetitive succession of the series of houses.<sup>52</sup> From a historical perspective, one could also foresee the symbolic break, that began at the beginning of the decade, between politics and religion (Regime and Church), expressed exceptionally in the INC’s towns since “the



**Figure 7.** Cañada de Agra. Traffic alley.

religious buildings are reasonably far away from the rest of the Civic Centre" (Figure 9).<sup>53</sup>

In its sensibility towards nature, Cañada de Agra shares with Vegaviana the use of the open space as landscape, affording it a leading place in the collective image of the village. That which in the Cáceres's project could indicate a discovery, in Albacete is the explicit intention of the village's design, where the social environment is linked to the physical, both emotionally and symbolically (Figure 10). If in the first example we find a certain naivety in keeping small examples of vegetation, now the habitat appears more abstract, simple topography to be developed ready for its landscape design and

for its ensuing appropriation by the inhabitant's activities and uses, away from the control of the INC. As it happens in the Matter paintings of Antoni Tàpies, the hillside "on the slope of a hill dominated by a circle of small hills around the valley which the Institute has transformed with the lines of the different levels and terraces. Everything remains empty, bare of vegetation, with the ochre, brown and pink colours of a great amorphous substance in which the village has been crystallized in its geometrical and rhythmic volumes in the same tones" (Figure 11).<sup>54</sup> Fernández del Amo confessed some years later, "only abstract art taught me how to see the plain and naked beauty in the lands of La Mancha."<sup>55</sup> In fact, in abstract art, a patch of colour





**Figure 8.** Cañada de Agra. Church and bell tower.

is seen as leading to abstraction in opposition to the line, with its inherent figurative function, to represent, to pretend to be real (Figure 12).<sup>56</sup>

### PARALLEL EXPERIENCES

After the Second World War few states were able to carry out new projects in rural colonization similar in size and impact as those implemented years before in Fascist Italy. One of the most influential examples in international architecture (including, of course, the planning of rural spaces) was the new town of Nagele. Located in the Dutch

Noordoospolder, its development is linked with the creation of new farming lands, claimed from the North Sea in this case. Due to the strong winds in the area, one of the indispensable elements of the design was the plantation of a small protecting forest, which would dominate the surrounding perspective of the urban nucleus and would isolate it from the agrarian landscape. From the first projects of 1947, the architects of the group De 8 en Opbouw "considered the artificial landscape of the polder as an interesting context for Nagele," an attitude as regards public space that would be maintained in subsequent projects.<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, in the urban structure of the third project



**Figure 9.** Cañada de Agra. Civic Centre.

submitted by Aldo van Eyck in 1954, the building lines are described:

*...here they are all different and combine to form a complex, non-repetitive composition. As with Lohse, the simple basic elements (rows of housing of three different lengths) combine to form continually changing variants of the same theme: the centrifugally-composed unit with an inner zone conceived as either a public garden or a square with trees. The relation between*

*the units is not only associative (their mutual similarity and their similarity to the whole that they make up) but also contextual. All seven units are situated outside the ring roads, but each of them extends across it with one or more houses penetrating into the central space.<sup>58</sup>*

*Nevertheless, the real colonization of the territory during the post-war period in Europe was suburban. Due to the formal similarities with the work of Fernández del Amo (only accidental in a way)*





**Figure 10.** Cañada de Agra. Pedestrian open area.

and, specially, for its architectural transcendence, one could mention the housing developments of the Danish architect Jørn Utzon, such as Kingo Houses in Helsingør (1956-1960) or the houses in Fredensborg (1962-1963), all of them designed “considering the scale, the movements, the wishes and tastes of the users; expressing a wish for integrating spontaneity.”<sup>59</sup> Much closer to the INC’s towns would be José Antonio Coderch’s project for Torre Valentina, a new kind of colonization for tourist uses: it was a sort of model of planning far from

the rural environment and formally similar to the suburban, which would become invasive in Spanish coastal areas. However, in Coderch’s project the main elements would be the landscape and the empty spaces:

*The narrow houses are terraced vertically, so as each of them has at least one living room, one bed room and one terrace facing the sea, and also to be better adapted to the terrain [...] Streets are below the houses to prevent people*



**Figure 11.** Cañada de Agra. A patch on the landscape.

*circulating in front of the living rooms and to allow children to play when it is raining [...] Areas with trees between the houses allow view of trees opposite the living room to be enjoyed. Open spaces extend the views upwards from the hotel square. All covered streets lead to open spaces.<sup>60</sup>*

## CONCLUSIONS

*The project of the new town in Cañada de Agra planned by Fernández del Amo and developed by the INC constitutes one of the master works of 20th century rural planning, as shown by its declaration*

*as an Asset of Cultural Interest, BIC. In spite of the relative isolation of Spanish architecture as regards the critical discussions of the modern movement, in its development one can identify positive solutions for problems of scale, the social context and its identification with the land, characteristic of the different alternatives in post-war Europe. In the 21st century, the sensitivity of this village in relation with the surrounding territory is still a referent for "the promotion of non-urban collective housing" and its contemporary challenges.<sup>61</sup>*

*Although in the middle of 20th century classic ruralism falls into a crisis as a discipline, in parallel with*





**Figure 12.** Cañada de Agra. Common life.

the development of massive suburbanization and the disappearance of Western plans of agrarian colonization, the rural environment still constitutes a reality opposing the urban growth of our planet: "In contrast with the shrinkage [of village and small towns], there are many rural regions, villages, and small towns, which can prosper from establishing a good working economy in a rural network."<sup>62</sup> In this regard the example of Cañada de Agra appears today as one of the swan songs that, leaving aside historical distance, can "serve as a medium of collective identity and culture for entire regions –representing an image of Heimat and the longing for a whole-some world."<sup>63</sup> This proposed analysis,

providing an open graphic method, attempts to identify the factors of its future critical relevance.

## Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> Francisco Javier Monclús and José Luis Oyón, *Historia y evolución de la colonización agraria en España* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios de la Administración Local, 1988). The criteria for the territorial ordinance in new towns was set down from the beginnings of the INC: according to productive reasons, the land to be colonized was divided according to the so called "modulo-carro" (cart-module) constituted by a circle of 2,5 km radius that fixed the maximum distance between the farming fields and the residential nucleus.

<sup>2</sup> Diario Oficial de Castilla-La Mancha 76, April 21, 2015, 11385-11392.

<sup>3</sup> Fundación DOCOMOMO Ibérico, accessed on February 12, 2020, [http://www.docomomoiberico.com/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=1029:canada-del-agra&Itemid=11&vista=1&lang=es](http://www.docomomoiberico.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=1029:canada-del-agra&Itemid=11&vista=1&lang=es).

- <sup>4</sup> Carlos Sambricio, Madrid: Ciudad-Región. De la ciudad ilustrada a la primera mitad del siglo XX (Madrid: Dirección General de Urbanismo y Planificación Regional de la Comunidad de Madrid, 1999). In the chapter "El nuevo orden urbano: Madrid, 1939-1955" we can find an account of the situation in postwar times. It is difficult to establish a final date for this period; it was fading through the fifties between the launching of the "Ley del Suelo" (Law on Land Regulation and Urban Planning) of 1956 and "Plan de Estabilización" (Plan of Stabilization Fund, due to the bankrupt state) of 1959. If we need to establish one strictly institutional criterion, we could state 1957 as the key moment, a year in which the "Ministerio de la Vivienda" (Ministry of Housing) was created.
- <sup>5</sup> Pablo Rabasco, "Censura, Colonización y Arte: Antonio Fernández Alba y Manolo Millares," 3W Revista Bibliográfica de Geografía y Ciencias Sociales 14, no. 826 (2009). This certain freedom must be understood within the narrow margins of Franco's postwar regime. In fact, there were many restrictions and censored projects or works in the INC Architecture Service.
- <sup>6</sup> "planteamientos contradictorios, ya que por una parte están concebidos en la idea de recrear formas y ambientes tradicionales, pero la seriación tipificada de viviendas y la geometría de los trazados varios los apartan inequívocamente de esa tradición." Fernando de Terán, Historia del Urbanismo en España, vol. 3 (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 1999), 231. Fernando de Terán was also the author of two projects of towns for the INC: Sacramento (Sevilla, 1965) and Setefilla (Sevilla, 1965).
- <sup>7</sup> Miguel Ángel Baldellou, Alejandro de la Sota (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1975), 22-23.
- <sup>8</sup> Víctor Pérez Escalano, "Pueblos de colonización," in Pueblos de colonización I: Guadalquivir y cuenca mediterránea sur, ed. Manuel Calzada (Córdoba: Fundación Arquitectura Contemporánea, 2006), 9-10.
- Iñaki Bergera, "La Puebla de Don Rodrigo y otros sueños," in Preactas del I Simposio Nacional Pueblos de Colonización durante el franquismo (Sevilla, April 2005). This article enables us to understand Rafael Aburto's "failure" in the INC. Iñaki Bergera, Rafael Aburto, arquitecto: la otra modernidad (Barcelona: Fundación Caja de Arquitectos, 2005). Although all the INC projects are signed, we use the term "anonymous" to mean the proposals of architects who developed their work mostly for the INC, or whose projects, away from the INC, did not have relevance among the professional media.
- <sup>9</sup> Camilo Sitte, Construcción de ciudades según principios artísticos (Barcelona: Canosa, 1926). Sánchez de Madariaga, Introducción al urbanismo. Conceptos y métodos de la planificación urbana (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1999), 22-47. Terán, Historia del Urbanismo en España, 235. Although the book by Camilo Sitte was published in 1889, it was not translated into Spanish until 1926; thus, his teachings were familiar to generations of architects (or students) during the Second Republic.
- <sup>10</sup> Terán, Historia del Urbanismo en España, 235.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid., 239. Loredana de Nito, "L'architettura dei nuovi pueblos di José Luis Fernández del Amo. Fondazioni agrarie in Spagna: 1953 - 1964" (PhD diss., Università degli Studi di Palermo, 2000). This thesis develops an exhaustive analysis of Italian influences in the INC, especially as regards the experience of Fascist colonization in Agro Pontino.
- <sup>12</sup> José Tamés, "Actuaciones del Instituto Nacional de Colonización 1939-1970," Urbanismo, no. 3 (1988): 9. This article offers a summary of the work of the INC years after Franco's death. Tamés establishes a reference to the Nahalal model (Richard Kauffmann, 1921) when describing typologies of houses under the epigraph Disposición radial. Theses influences of European utopian urbanism, clearly socialist, could not have been possible in his historical moment. However, its origin is obvious in the town of Miralrío, designed by José Luis Fernández del Amo in 1964.
- <sup>13</sup> Pablo Rabasco, "Las influencias extranjeras en la arquitectura y urbanismo del Instituto Nacional de Colonización," Goya, no. 336 (2011): 255-256.
- <sup>14</sup> Manuel Calzada, "El organigrama del INC como base para una cronología del Instituto," in Preactas del I Simposio Nacional Pueblos de Colonización durante el franquismo (Sevilla, April 2005).
- <sup>15</sup> "Decreto de 18 de octubre de 1939 organizando el Instituto Nacional de Colonización," Boletín Oficial del Estado, October 27, 1939.
- <sup>16</sup> "Ley de Bases para la Colonización de Grandes Zonas de 26 de diciembre de 1939," Boletín Oficial del Estado, January 25, 1940.
- <sup>17</sup> The colonization of Agro Pontino looked to drain the Lazio swamps as opposed to the need to irrigate in Spanish lands.
- <sup>18</sup> Loredana de Nito, "L'architettura dei nuovi pueblos di José Luis Fernández del Amo," 24. Setting aside their intrinsic functionality, these Italian towns have been transformed in a completely different way to the Spanish villages. The population in 2018 of the five new cities founded in the Agro Pontino: Aprilia, 74,190 inhabitants; Littoria (today Latina), 126,470 inhabitants; Pomezia 63,641 inhabitants; Pontinia, 14,915 inhabitants; and Sabaudia, 20,536 inhabitants. Population at 1 January 2018, according to Istituto Nazionale di Statistica ISTAT, <http://www.demo.istat.it/pop2018/index.html>, accessed 29 October 2018.
- <sup>19</sup> José Tamés, "Proceso urbanístico de urbanización interior," Revista Nacional de Arquitectura, no. 83 (1948): 20.
- <sup>20</sup> Francisco Javier Capistegui, "Esa ciudad maldita, cuna del centralismo, la burocracia y el liberalismo: la ciudad como enemigo en el tradicionalismo español," in Actas del Congreso Internacional Arquitectura, ciudad e ideología antiurbana (Pamplona: T6 Ediciones, 2002). Ramón Tamames, La República. La era de Franco (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1988).
- <sup>21</sup> Arquitectura, no. 10 (December 1934).
- <sup>22</sup> José Tamés, Actuaciones del INC 1939-1970, 6. As in the case of the Zionists, this reference is made when democracy was already established, while he ignored it expressly in the article of 1948.
- <sup>23</sup> Miguel Centellas, Los pueblos de colonización de Fernández del Amo. Arte, arquitectura y urbanismo (Barcelona: Fundación Caja de Arquitectos, 2010), 21. Miguel Centellas, Alfonso Ruiz, and Pablo García-Pellicer, Los pueblos de colonización en Almería (Almería: Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Almería, Instituto de Estudios Almerienses y Fundación Cajamar, 2009), 135.
- <sup>24</sup> In the 1933 competition, the team formed by Arrillaga, Zavala and Domínguez proposed independent circulations for pedestrians and carts. Although it is obviously the Rodburn plan (as well as Gropius's for the Törten colony), it is important to remember that Juan de Zavala attended with Fernando García Mercadal the first CIAM, that took place in the castle of La Sarraz in 1928.
- <sup>25</sup> Miguel Centellas, Los pueblos de colonización de Fernández del Amo, 27.
- <sup>26</sup> Enriqueta Antón, "Artistas infiltrados: rojos, ateos y abstractos en los pueblos de Franco," Cambio 16, no. 592 (1983): 98-103.
- <sup>27</sup> Alejandro Herrera, "Independencia de circulaciones y trazado de poblados," Revista Nacional de Arquitectura, no. 81 (1948): 348-355.
- <sup>28</sup> Alejandro Herrera, "15 normas para la composición de conjunto en barriadas de vivienda unifamiliar," Revista Nacional de Arquitectura, no. 168 (1955): 17-28.
- <sup>29</sup> Desiderius Lenz, The Aesthetics of Beuron and other writings (London: Francis Boutle Publishers, 2002). The arch abbey of Beuron, original home of Maredsous Abbey, developed a form of monastic renewal in the arts, which was known as the Beuron School. Some of its main actors were Father Desiderius Lenz, and later, after the end of World War II, the painter Jan Verkade, a member of the group "Nabis" who received his religious orders in Beuron in 1902, under the name of Willibrord Verkade. Having been in contact with Father Nicolas Dayez, in charge of the archives of de Maredsous Abbey, he has not been able to confirm us the stay there of José Luis Fernández del Amo, although there is evidence of some other Spanish refugees during the Civil War.
- <sup>30</sup> Vicente Aguilera Cerní, La posguerra. Documentos y testimonios, vol. 1 (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1975), 26. After leaving public office in 1942, the last twelve years of the life of Eugenio D'Ors were concentrated in the Academia Breve de Crítica de Arte (Brief Academy of Art Criticism), with the main objective of "ending the shame of having the people of Madrid, and the rest of Spain, including the more fervent critics, ignore even a single page of universal contemporary art."
- <sup>31</sup> José Luis Fernández del Amo, "Una integración de la Artes?," in Palabra y obra. Escritos reunidos (Madrid: Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Madrid, 1995), 35-46.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., 36.

- <sup>33</sup> María Dolores Jiménez-Blanco Carrillo de Albornoz, José Luis Fernández del Amo. Un proyecto de Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 1995). Created by Joaquín Ruiz Jiménez as a split from the Museo de Arte Moderno, the responsibility of Fernández del Amo as regards the MNAC was not limited to the direction and orientation of the new museum; he also launched an innovative museum project which laid the foundations for the present Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía.
- <sup>34</sup> Laurence Toussaint, El Paso y el arte abstracto en España (Madrid: Cátedra, 1983).
- <sup>35</sup> Fernández del Amo, Palabra y obra, 46.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.
- <sup>38</sup> José Luis Fernández del Amo, "Anteproyecto del poblado 'Torres de Salinas' en la Zona del Alberche," June 1951, 1-3, Sig. 3196, INC archives, San Fernando de Henares.
- <sup>39</sup> José Luis Fernández del Amo, "Proyecto del pueblo de 'Vegaviana' en la zona regable del Borbollón," 1954, 1, Sig. 4849, INC archives, San Fernando de Henares.
- <sup>40</sup> José Antonio Flores, "Vegaviana. Una lección de arquitectura," Cuaderno de notas, no. 14 (2013): 33.
- <sup>41</sup> Kevin Lynch, La imagen de la ciudad (Buenos Aires: Editorial Infinito, 1976). Sébastien Marot, Suburbanismo y el arte de la memoria (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 2006).
- <sup>42</sup> "Propuesta de emplazamiento y ocupación de los solares de los nuevos pueblos de Mingotil, Cañada de Agra y Nava de Campana, del Sector I de la zona regable del canal de Hellín," 1958, Sig. 8308, INC archives, San Fernando de Henares.
- <sup>43</sup> José Luis Fernández del Amo, "Proyecto de pueblo de Cañada de Agra, en la zona de Hellín, Memoria," May 1965, 1, Sig. 11693, INC archives, San Fernando de Henares.
- <sup>44</sup> José Tamés, "Informe del Servicio de Arquitectura," 3, Sig. 3196, INC archives, San Fernando de Henares. This report from the Architecture Service offers three possible models of reference to be considered: one "Rationalistic," corresponding to the satellite zones of Milan (which could have influenced the design of San Isidro de Albaterra) and two recent constructions of Garden Cities: the Swedish Örebro (with similarities in Vegaviana) and the American Green Brook, with its characteristic strong topography and separated traffic plan with streets in cul-de-sac.
- <sup>45</sup> Alejandro Herrera, 15 normas, 17-28.
- <sup>46</sup> José Luis Fernández del Amo, "Proyecto de pueblo de Cañada de Agra," 2, Sig. 11693, INC archives, San Fernando de Henares.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.
- <sup>48</sup> José Luis Fernández del Amo, "Cañada de Agra: un pueblo del Instituto Nacional de Colonización," Revista Nacional de Arquitectura, no. 98 (1967): 11.
- <sup>49</sup> Loredana de Nito, "L'architettura dei nuovi pueblos di José Luis Fernández del Amo," 128.
- <sup>50</sup> José Tamés, "Informe del Servicio de Arquitectura," 2, Sig. 11693, INC archives, San Fernando de Henares. It is easy to detect, too, the time lapse between the assignment and the submission of the project, between July 1959 and May 1962.
- <sup>51</sup> Eduardo Delgado Orusco, Caminos cruzados: 7 arquitectos no canónicos (Buenos Aires: Diseño, 2014), 77.
- <sup>52</sup> Image referring to the German model in the Törten Estate (Walter Gropius, 1926).
- <sup>53</sup> Eduardo Delgado Orusco, Caminos cruzados, 78.
- <sup>54</sup> José Luis Fernández del Amo, "Cañada de Agra," Arquitectura, no. 98 (1967): 36. Already acting as director of the MNAC, Fernández del Amo asked Tàpies for some important work so as to include it in the recently opened museum, using a curious system of lending.
- <sup>55</sup> José Luis Fernández del Amo, Encuentro con la Creación (Madrid: Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, 1991), 18.
- <sup>56</sup> In Spanish, "patch" means "mancha," the same place-name of this region Castilla-La Mancha.
- <sup>57</sup> Enrique Abad Monllor, "Nagele, a green building without a roof," in EURAU 2014 Composite Cities. Conference proceedings (Istanbul, 12-14 November 2014), 7401-7413.
- <sup>58</sup> Francis Strauven, The Shape of Relativity (Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura, 1998), 234-235.
- <sup>59</sup> Josep Maria Montaner, Después del movimiento moderno: Arquitectura de la segunda mitad del siglo XX (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 1993), 89.
- <sup>60</sup> José Antonio Coderch, "Hotel y apartamentos en Torre Valentina (Costa Brava) España, Memoria," in J. A. Coderch: Torre Valentina (Barcelona: Edicions UPC, 1999), 7.
- <sup>61</sup> Eric Soria Badía, "Unas palabras," in *Ibid.*, 5.
- <sup>62</sup> Vanessa Miriam Carlow, "The Relevance of Thinking Rural," in Ruralism: The Future of Villages and Small Towns in an Urbanizing World (Berlin: Jovis Verlag, 2016), 6-7.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

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#### IMAGE SOURCES

**1, 5, 6, 8, 9.** Joaquín del Palacio "Kindel." Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación Archives. **2.** José Luis Fernández del Amo. Fernández del Amo Archives. **3, 4.** Author's drawing. **7, 10, 11, 12.** Author's photograph.